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SIPDIS

FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ENGLAND FROM THE AMBASSADOR

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE GORDON
ENGLAND'S VISIT TO QATAR

Classified By: Amb. Joseph E. LeBaron, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Embassy Doha welcomes your visit to Qatar. During your last visit here, in July 2005, you met with Qatari Armed Forces Chief of Staff MG Hamad al-Attiyah and other Qatari officials following MG al-Attiyah's unfortunate experience at a Florida airport. You also met with MG al-Attiyah during his visit to Washington last winter. For your upcoming visit, you will be meeting again MG al-Attiyah and, we expect, either the Amir or the Heir Apparent.

¶2. (C) At the strategic level, the U.S.-Qatar military relationship is in good shape. Qatari officials regard our strategic partnership as permanent, outliving any political differences with Washington. The Qataris appreciate the frequent high-level DOD visitors here, but will nevertheless be concerned about where the transition in Washington will leave the U.S.-Qatar military relationship.

¶3. (C) Despite the positive atmosphere at the strategic level, our operational-level cooperation continues to be hampered by difficulties with Qatari Customs. Some of the problems are self-inflicted, including troops and contractors transiting Al-Udeid with alcohol, pornography, and occasionally drugs. But some of the customs difficulties may also be a GOQ "tool" to remind us of their sovereignty) but unfortunately in ways that have a real operational impact on U.S. operations here.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE U.S.-QATAR MILITARY RELATIONSHIP

¶4. (C) RELOCATION OF CENTCOM FORWARD HEADQUARTERS (CFH) and other facilities from Camp As-Saylieh: The Qataris eventually want all U.S. facilities out of Camp As-Saylieh and two committees are currently discussing different aspects of the move. Sticking points will be the timeline (ours long, Qatar's short) and cost-sharing. The new CFH at Al-Udeid should be completed and fully mission capable in May 2009. A new SOCCENT Forward Headquarters will also be completed in 2009.

¶5. (S) SHEIKH TAMIM INVITATION TO CENTCOM: GEN Abizaid several times invited Sheikh Tamim to visit CENTCOM, an invitation that ADM Fallon repeated. We also offered to arrange meetings in Washington. Tamim's response was always the same: he wants to come, "but needs to find the right time." We speculate that either the Qataris are concerned about Tamim finding himself in discussions out of his depth, fearful that he will be treated poorly by his Washington interlocutors, or annoyed that the invitation is to Tampa, not Washington. The Qatari Armed Forces COS had an exceptionally good experience in his recent visits to Washington and Tampa and this may help convince Tamim to finally accept the invitation.

¶6. (S) PATRIOT MISSILE LAUNCH: On October 15, 2007, a routine test sequence resulted in the accidental launch of a Patriot Missile from a battery at Camp As-Saylieh. The missile landed on the Qatari COS' farm a few kilometers from Camp As-Saylieh. Fortunately, no one was hurt and there was no property damage. U.S.-Qatari cooperation on the investigation was good and the Qataris appreciated that ADM Fallon responded quickly to their request to stand both batteries down and physically remove missiles from the launchers. The investigation revealed a software gap that allowed the missile to be fired even in training mode and a doctrinal gap that allowed the firing sequence to be executed without the launchers being physically disconnected from the launch controller. The Qataris signaled that they would agree to putting the Patriot batteries back up, but first asked for the full report on the incident, temporary rules of engagement, and an analysis of the Patriots' coverage area to ensure that the city of Doha is covered and not just the military bases. Completion of the final report took longer than expected, but has since been briefed to senior Qatari military officers and we are now close to redeploying the batteries.

¶7. (C) DEFENSE SALES: Until recently, the U.S. had never made a major defense sale to Qatar. In July, however, Qatar signed contracts with Boeing for two C-17s with an option for two more, and with Lockheed-Martin for four C-130Js with an option for two more. Boeing anticipates initial delivery of the first aircraft in August 2009. The C-17 and C-130 sales are a signal the Qataris are beginning to invest in their own defensive capabilities. They are also looking at U.S.

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helicopters and Hellfire II missiles as part of their National Security Shield effort, and possibly F-16 or F-18 fighter aircraft.

¶8. (C) DEVELOPMENT OF NEW NAVAL BASE: We believe the Qataris have finally settled on a location for a new naval base in the north of the peninsula. They have not finalized the plan or chosen a contractor (Bechtel wants the contract and we have advocated for them). They made clear that the base will be large enough to host the largest U.S. naval vessels and very much want the U.S. to utilize it. During then-TRANSCOM Commander GEN Schwartz's visit in April, the Qatari COS mentioned that the port could be used as a Seaport for military cargo and logistics support. The Qataris also have plans to develop a major new commercial port south of Doha and intend it to be large enough to accommodate the largest U.S. Naval vessels, including aircraft carriers.

¶9. (C) SECOND RUNWAY AT AL-UDEID: AFCENT has long wanted Qatar to build a second runway at Al-Udeid, something the Qataris had long resisted. In March, the Qataris finally agreed not only to build it, but to pay for it.

¶10. (C) CUSTOMS ISSUES: Customs problems have come to plague our working-level engagement with the Qatari Armed Forces. There have been numerous incidents where Coalition personnel violating established Qatar customs procedures on entry or exit from the country, leading to Qatari accusations that U.S. personnel are not respecting Qatari sovereignty. These led Qatar, in March 2007, to implement troublesome new customs procedures for personnel, equipment, and cargo entering or transiting the country. CENTCOM submitted a counterproposal in June 2007. CENTCOM J5, AFCENT, and Embassy OMC personnel held discussions with the Qatari Armed Forces in June and November 2007 and March 2008, which led to agreement on temporary procedures. Only constant Embassy OMC and AFCENT interaction with the Qatar GHQ and their customs officials prevent detrimental effects to U.S. operations. We regard the temporary procedures as a stepping stone for permanent procedures that respect U.S. and Qatar sovereignty, support U.S. operations and are in line with the Defense Cooperation Agreement.

¶11. (S/NF) B-1 INCIDENT: A ground incident the evening of April 4 led to the total loss of a B-1 aircraft, though very fortunately no injuries to the crew or other personnel. AFCENT coordination and communication with the Qatari military throughout the incident was excellent, and may actually have deepened our relationships with Qatar's military.

¶12. (S) GUANTANAMO DETAINEES: Qatar's Attorney General, with whom you met briefly in February, was extremely interested in securing the release of Al Jazeera cameraman (and Sudanese citizen) Sami al-Hajj to Qatar, and was disappointed that he was ultimately transferred to Sudan. Within weeks of his transfer to Sudan, Al-Hajj was back in Qatar, ostensibly working in a newly created position at Al Jazeera producing human right-related programming. He returned, however, without Qatar's Attorney General being able to claim credit. Meanwhile, the sole Qatari citizen in GTMO, Jarallah al-Marri, was transferred to Qatari custody on July 27. Al-Marri's brother, Ali al-Marri, remains in custody in the Charleston Naval Brig. If the Qataris raise the issue of Guantanamo detainees, we recommend you note our satisfaction that Qatar's sole GTMO detainee, Jarallah al-Marri, was transferred to Qatari custody on July 27. His brother, Ali al-Marri, remains in the Charleston Naval Brig in a different, more complicated, legal status.

THE BROADER U.S.-QATAR RELATIONSHIP

¶13. (C) Over the coming years, Qatar's importance to the U.S. will only grow. Qatar is now the largest LNG exporter in the world and has the world's third largest reserves after Russia and Iran. By the end of 2009, Qatari will become a major supplier of LNG to the U.S. market. Fueled by growing exports of oil and LNG, Qatar's economy has been booming. Some estimates put per capita income at USD 60,000. Between now and 2012, Qatar's LNG exports will double, bringing a corresponding growth to Qatar's economy and the global financial clout of Qatar's sovereign wealth fund, the Qatar Investment Authority. Unfortunately, wild economic growth is also producing 14 percent inflation (felt most acutely in the housing market) and feeding a demand for cheap construction labor in a country that already has a very poor record on

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treatment of foreign workers.

¶14. (C) IRAQ: The Amir thinks we made a big mistake toppling Saddam Hussein, but shares our view that restoration of order and a successful democratic transition in Iraq are of paramount importance not only to Iraq but to the region. While the Qataris have expressed concerns about civil war in Iraq, their officials also state publicly that the Coalition needs to stay in the country to establish wider security. However, a strong distaste for Iraq's Shia-dominated government drives Qatar's resistance to follow through on some of our priorities, including comprehensive debt forgiveness and greater political engagement. Unlike Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Qatar has made no commitment to send an ambassador to Baghdad.

¶15. (S) IRAN: Iran hangs heavily over our relationship with Qatar, which worries that we may have plans for Iran, perhaps even military plans, that we are not sharing with them. Qatar fears and deeply distrusts Iran, and shares our concern about its nuclear program, which it regards as unstoppable. But because of Qatar's geographic proximity, vulnerability of its energy installations, and the fact that its massive off-shore gas reserves are shared with Iran, Qatar will do nothing to engender an antagonistic relationship.

ISSUES TO RAISE

¶16. (S) During your August 5-6 visit, we recommend making the following points:

-- Thank the Government of Qatar (GOQ) for its continued partnership and support for the war on terror and our broader U.S. military operations in the region. Note that this is especially evident from the access Qatar gives the the U.S. military at Al-Udeid Air Base and Camp As-Saylieh, and GOQ-funded construction at Al-Udeid.

-- Explain that despite the political transition in Washington following U.S. elections, there will be considerable continuity in our military relationship with Qatar. GEN Petraeus met with MG al-Attiyeh May 10 in Doha and we expect him to be a frequent visitor here once he assumes command of CENTCOM later this year.

-- Congratulate MG al-Attiyeh on signing contracts in July for purchase of C-17 and C-130 aircraft. We have a strong commitment to help the GOQ derive maximum benefit from these purchases, which represent an important advancement in our mil-mil relationship.

-- Note that a logical next step in our strategic relationship would be for Qatar to join the maritime Coalition. The new NAVCENT commander, VADM Gortney, will have just visited Qatar and looks forward to engaging the GOQ regularly.

-- Tell MG al-Attiyeh that we are pleased to provide Special Forces personnel to join an upcoming Qatari exercise in Mongolia and are always looking for such ways to deepen our military relationship.

-- In your meeting with MG al-Attiyeh, you might note that customs procedures affecting U.S. operations at Al-Udeid and Camp As-Saylieh remain an irritant in what otherwise is a solid working relationship, and request GOQ assistance in establishing workable, long-term technical solutions in this area.

LeBaron